Amendments to the Specification:

Please delete the paragraph beginning on page 2, line 26, and replace it with the following paragraph:

--Interferons have been modified by the addition of polyethylene glycol ("PEG") (see US 4,917,888; US 5,382,657; WO 99/55377; WO 02/09766~~; WO 02/3114~~). PEG addition can improve serum half-life and solubility. Serum half-life can also be extended by complexing with monoclonal antibodies (US 5,055,289), by adding glycosylation sites (EP 529300), by co-administering the interferon receptor (US 6,372,207), by preparing single-chain multimers (WO 02/36626) or by preparing fusion proteins comprising an interferon and an immunoglobulin or other protein (WO 01/03737, ~~WO 02/3472,~~ WO 02/36628).--

Please delete the paragraph beginning on page 2, line 26, and replace it with the following paragraph:

Interferon variants with improved solubility and soluble expression have been generated (See USSN: 10/676,705, filed September 30, 2003, titled Interferon Variants With Improved Properties, incorporated by reference in its entirety herein). Interferon beta variants with enhanced stability have also been claimed, in which the hydrophobic core was optimized using rational design methods (WO 00/68387). Alternate formulations that promote interferon stability or solubility have also been disclosed (~~US 4,675,483;~~ US 5,730,969; US 5,766,582; WO 02/38170). Interferon beta muteins with enhanced solubility have been claimed, in which several leucine and phenylalanine residues are replaced with serine, threonine, or tyrosine residues (WO 98/48018).